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RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON PRIORITY 2943  
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RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001039

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [KVIR](#) [PINR](#) [BM](#) [KN](#) [BG](#)  
SUBJECT: WILLING TO PLAY BALL: BANGLADESH FOREIGN SECRETARY  
OPEN TO SOME MOVEMENT ON UNGA RESOLUTIONS KOSOVO  
RECOGNITION AND GREATER REGIONAL COOPERATION

REF: A. SECSTATE 108921  
[1](#)B. DHAKA832

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) In a wide ranging meeting with the Ambassador on November 15, Bangladesh,s No. 2 diplomat, Foreign Secretary Mohamed Mijarul Quayes, emphasized the importance of close ties with the United States and discussed the potential for some movement on UN- related concerns and recognition of Kosovo. He explained the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) was sympathetic to criticisms of Burma, Iran and North Korea but generally opposed country specific resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The Foreign Secretary noted that such resolutions were selective -- singling out only a few countries with poor human rights records while ignoring others. Quayes also spoke of the potential for cooperation with India and Burma on cross-border issues. He emphasized that Bangladesh wanted to project a values-based foreign policy and demonstrate to the world that it was a moderate and secular country.

A special relationship?  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Quayes expressed pleasure at close U.S.-Bangladesh ties as evidenced by recent high-level USG visits, including those of Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women,s Issues Melanne Verveer and Assistant U.S. Trade Representative (AUSTR) Michael Delaney. Ambassador Moriarty agreed that these visits helped advance the bilateral agenda. AUSTR Delaney promoted a U.S.-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), and Ambassador Verveer highlighted the role of women in major USG foreign assistance priorities, including food security and climate change. The Ambassador observed that Ambassador Verveer first visited Bangladesh in 1995, while Chief of Staff to First Lady Hillary Rodham-Clinton, and was greatly impressed by Bangladesh on both occasions.

UNGA votes and Kosovo recognition  
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[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador conveyed our opposition to the use of "no-action8 motions in the UNGA, which prevented discussion of and action on human rights issues and ultimately undermined the UN itself. The Ambassador urged the GOB to vote in favor of ) or consider abstaining on ) UNGA resolutions on the human rights situation in Burma, Iran and

North Korea. The Foreign Secretary replied that the GOB was equally concerned about human rights conditions in these countries, but questioned whether passing more resolutions would have any positive impact. In particular, he said the GOB was more concerned with outcomes and was looking at other &creative ways8 the international community could improve the situation in these countries. Country specific UNGA resolutions appeared selective and inconsistent Quayes said. The Foreign Secretary indicated the GOB would be willing to work with the Canadian government to make progress on human rights concerns in Iran. The Ambassador emphasized that the Iranian government should face some form of sanction after its handling of the recent disputed elections. Quayes agreed and suggested perhaps the UNGA should consider the idea of an election specific resolution on Iran.

14. (C) The Ambassador also raised the issue of Kosovo recognition with the Foreign Secretary, who said the GOB was still deciding whether it would recognize Kosovo. Quayes said the arguments for recognition were compelling. He added however, that the GOB was concerned about the security of small countries and the precedent that would be created for all states facing ethnic problems by the recognition of Kosovo.

Burma and India revisited  
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15. (C) The Foreign Secretary noted with interest USG efforts to open a dialogue with the Government of Burma. The Ambassador said that the USG was trying a &carrot and stick8 approach and that the junta seemed receptive. Quayes

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suggested the military dictatorship in Burma may be trying to gain international legitimacy in the run up to national elections in the country early next year. Quayes observed that Bangladesh-Burma relations were complex, despite the short border and the fact that the GOB was mainly concerned about the situation of the Rohingya refugees. He acknowledged the Rohingya were heavily persecuted in Burma and his government was worried that a deterioration in conditions there would serve to push greater numbers of Rohingya into Bangladesh. Urging the international community to ensure that development efforts target everyone in the region so as not to create disparities, Quayes said the refugee camps were artificial and unsustainable in the long run. He raised concerns that Rohingya might try to settle outside the camps to access social services.

16. (C) Quayes said the GOB had restarted bilateral talks on the maritime boundary issue with Burma and India. At the same time, Bangladesh had served notice with the United Nations for arbitration, given that bilateral negotiations had a tendency to drag on for long periods of time.

17. (C) In terms of bilateral relations with India, the Foreign Secretary said that in discussions with the Indians over issues such as transit rights to northeastern India and greater regional connectivity, the Indians had a lot of needs but Bangladesh had few. The Ambassador said the GOB should charge the Indians for access through the country; the prospect of financial gain would be a huge selling point to the people of Bangladesh. The Foreign Secretary agreed, but added that certain sections of the population were reflexively cynical of any dealings between India and Bangladesh.

A values-based foreign policy  
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18. (C) The Foreign Secretary said Bangladesh wanted to reassert itself in the subcontinent, basing its foreign policy on universal values, and demonstrate that politics in the subcontinent should not just be focused on relations

between India and Pakistan. He added that Bangladesh had dealt over the course of its history with ideas such as democracy, human rights, marginalization of cultures and inclusiveness. Most Bangladeshis recoiled from overt displays of religion and distrusted the &Pakistan model.8 Quayes said Bangladesh had witnessed a number of trends away from radicalization. The Ambassador praised Bangladesh,s success and said it was for these reasons the United States was interested in seeing this Muslim majority country become prosperous.

Comment

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19. (C) The Government of Bangladesh seems willing to look at different possibilities to &move the ball forward8 on the human rights situation in Burma, Iran and North Korea, including offering support for an elections-focused resolution on the Iranian elections. A vote in favor of the three UN human rights resolutions concerning these three countries appears unlikely. The GOB continues to waffle over recognizing Kosovo; it supports Kosovo but appears reluctant to antagonize Russia. Some speculate Bangladesh does not want to jeopardize a potential Russian-supported nuclear power project here. The Foreign Secretary, who previously served as Bangladesh,s Ambassador to Russia, struck a moderate tone, was well versed in the issues, and appeared an effective champion for his country,s agenda.

MORIARTY